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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to answer remarks by Frank Hausler and others mirimizing the significance of Baudouin de Courtenay's contribution to descriptive linguistics. The author emphasizes the psychological orientation in the development of Baudouin's work in phonemics and morphology, and seeks to reconcile Baudouin's theories with later criticism based on antimentalist grounds. Differences with the Prague School's emphasis on "meaning-differentiating" function are also considered. (VM)

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THE PHONOLOGY OF BAUDOUIN DE COURTENAY

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There seems to be a widespread belief that Jan Baudouin de Courtenay (1845-1929) was a respectable linguist, who suggested a kind of psychological phoneme definition and who in various ways was a pioneer of modern phonology, but that his theories have since been greatly improved upon, if not superseded, by the Prague School. It would seem that relatively few linguists possess a thorough knowledge of Baudouin's works.

Baudouin's phoneme definition offers a complicated problem, especially as Baudouin himself came to various phoneme definitions during the course of his development.

From early in the 70's Baudouin developed a phoneme definition where "die Rolle der Laute im Mechanismus der Sprache" (the role of the sounds in the mechanism of the language) is decisive. This role is also called "morphological" because the question is to show how sounds can be built up into words. Such a definition is different from a "Betrachtung der Laute vom rein physiologischen Standpunkt" (considering sounds from a purely physiological point of view).

Many other quotations may be mentioned to illustrate that for Baudouin the difference between an analysis of substance and a "functional" analysis is completely clear. However, the term "phoneme" was not used at the beginning, but was proposed only at the end of the 70's, not by Baudouin himself, but by his pupil Kruszewski.

In connection with the above mentioned quotations it may be appropriate to state that Baudouin uses a very broad definition of morphology. His morphology comprises not only "endings" but describes generally (amongst other things) the syntagmatic structure of words. Furthermore, Baudouin already recognized and explained those facts which in more recent terms one would call distribution and (positional) allophones, although the terms he used have not been accepted.

Around the mid 80's Baudouin's phoneme interpretation takes on a new accent. It is now, according to Häusler, that the accomplishment of the transition to the "psychological" phoneme concept takes place. The most frequently quoted phoneme definition of Baudouin's is: "Das Phonem = eine einheitliche, der phonetischen Welt angehörende Vorstellung, welche mittelst psychischer Verschmelzung der durch die Aussprache eines und desselben Lautes erhaltenen Eindrücke in der Seele entsteht = psychischer Äquivalent des Sprachlautes." (The phoneme = a homogeneous concept in the phonetic world, created in the mind by means of psychical merging of the impressions gained by the pronunciation of one and the same sound = psychical equivalent of the speech sound).

Characteristic also are some lines of a work of 1910, where Baudouin speaks about certain parts of the syllable, "die im Augenblick ihrer Verwirklichung Laute, vom Standpunkt ihrer ununterbrochenen Existenz in der individuellen Psyche Phoneme genannt werden" (which at the moment of their realization are called sounds and which from the point of view of their uninterrupted existence in the individual mind are called phonemes).

Such citations certainly give evidence of a "psychological" orientation. However, it does not seem appropriate to speak about a change to this kind of orientation as Häusler does. Earlier definitions of Baudouin depend on morphological facts which are also of a psychological nature. The difference is rather that morphology is now less fundamental and also that parts of the definition are gradually being better worked out.

At first, Baudouin saw the phonemes as "indivisible" or "homogeneous" (which, seen from his "morphological" point of view, seems to me to be justified; at that level of abstraction of the description, where for example "the word" is composed of certain phonemes, distinctive features are of no interest). But later he came to the conclusion that a phoneme can be divided into those parts, which later came to be called "distinctive features", and he even suggests the possibility of defining them not only articulatorily but also auditorily. From the year 1910 he calls the

"mental images" (Vorstellungen) of the particular performances of the speech organs whilst pronouncing a sound "Kineme" and the mental images of the auditory impressions thereby generated build the auditory impression of a sound, "Akusmen".
However, in the case of the phoneme variants Baudouin does not come to a satisfactory conclusion.
In a later period of Baudouin's work the concepts of "morphologizing" and "semasiologizing" are emphasized, the morphological aspect of an earlier period being further elaborated on. Häusler comments thus: "... (1910) geht er in dieser Richtung noch einen Schritt weiter. Als 'psychisch-sozial' und damit auch für den sprachlichen Verkehr von Bedeutung möchte er nur den Teil aus der Vorstellungs-Phonetik bezeichnet wissen, der sich mit solchen Aussprache- und Hörvorstellungen befasst, die sich 'morphologisieren' und 'semasiologisieren', d.h. sich mit morphologischen und semasiologischen Vorstellungen verbinden" ... (in 1910) he takes a further step in this direction. (He wants only to label 'psycho-social', and thus also important for linguistic communication, that part of the mental image phonetics, which deals with such pronunciation and audition images which 'morphologize' and 'semasiologize' themselves, i.e. those which relate themselves to morphological and semasiological images.) Baudouin himself states: "Es morphologisieren sich nur gewisse Aussprache - / Hörunterschiede, die in verschiedenen Sprachen unterschiedlich sind". Only specific pronunciation / audition distinctions, morphologize themselves and these differ in different languages.)
The "meaning-differentiating" function of the phonemes, which later in the Prague School plays such an important role is, for Baudouin, of only minor importance, although it should not be overlooked that the concept was not unfamiliar to him.
Amongst the problems to be resolved he mentions (1889): (Welche Rolle spielt der Unterschied der Töne oder Laute bei der Unterscheidung von Wortbildungen...?" (What role does the difference of tones or sounds play in the differentiation of word structures?). Also Baudouin's well known pupil L.V. Ščerba is very precise about this point (1912): "Phonem wird die kürzeste allgemeine phonetische Vorstellung einer

gegebenen Sprache gennant, die die Fähigkeit besitzt, sich mit Bedeutungsvorstellungen zu assoziieren and Wörter zu differenzieren." (The shortest general phonetic mental image of a language possessing the capacity to associate with mental images of meaning and to differentiate words will be called a phoneme).

Two points have often been considered important by more recent linguists in their negative criticism of Baudouin's thoughts:

1. Baudouin's phonemes (as well as his "morphological" units) are of a "psychic" nature. Expressions such as "mental image", "imagination", "intention", "mind", "feeling" "conscience" are used again and again by Baudouin, Ščerba and other successors. Of course such a "psychologistic" attitude is criticized by followers of the later "antipsychologism" and "antimentalism". As is well known, these later tendencies are still very strong. However, should one not generally go back to ideas similar to those of Baudouin (but obviously using more respectable terms like "intuitively clear" or "adequate"?) i.e. should one not recognize more generally that the results gained by introspection through simple questioning or by real tests are of basic significance for the description of languages?

Otherwise one has to make one's choice between several "possible" solutions through criteria like "simplicity". For years it has, however, been seen that through application of such criteria coupled with negligence of "adequacy" most peculiar, although seriously meant, contributions to the description of languages have been presented (see Linguistische Einheiten im Rahmen der modernen Sprachwissenschaft, p.23-25).

On the whole Häusler interprets Baudouin's psychologism in the right way. If Baudouin says about a language phenomen that it exists in the mind, he most often means nothing more than what later linguists call "functionally relevant". However, Häusler is, in my opinion, too negative on this point. He speaks, for example, about the overcoming of psychologism by Trubetzkoy, implying by this expression that Baudouin's psychologism is unacceptable.

2. Baudouin does not, to the extent that the Prague School does, underline the "meaning-differentiating" function. Although this is undeniable, it should, on the other hand, be emphasized that Baudouin stresses something else which is also of great importance. For Baudouin the phonemes build, so to speak, "positively" morphological units and the "negative" role of differentiating between phonemes is less emphasized.

It is not true that, as certain critics believed, Baudouin ignored completely the meaning-differentiating function (see just mentioned quotations from Baudouin himself and his pupil Ščerba).

Whatever may be the weakness in Baudouin's definitions, there is no doubt that he has, at an early date, made an important contribution to the concept of the phoneme. Also in other respects he is ahead of his contemporaries. In accordance with his basic orientation Baudouin opposes, in a discussion with A. Schleicher, the interpretation that language is an organism, that language exists autonomously, and that linguistics is therefore a kind of natural science.

Baudouin comments thus on similar ideas: "Die Sprache lebt nicht ausserhalb des Menschen, sondern sie lebt einzig und allein in ihren Trägern", and "Alle diese Widersprüche verschwinden, wenn man an die Stelle des personifizierenden Wortes Organismus (das ist ein Wesen, das einen bestimmten Raum einnimmt, sich ernährt, sich vermehrt, das wahrnehmbar ist) Funktion eines Organismus setzt (das ist die Folge der Tätigkeit von Organen)" - (Language does not exist outside man, but lives solely in the users" and, "All these contradictions disappear if the personifying word organism (which is a being which occupies a certain space, feeds itself, multiplies, is perceptible) is replaced by function of an organism (that is consequence of the capacity of organs).

Baudouin already saw, before the time of the Neogrammarians, the significance of the study of living languages. His studies were already what was later called "synchronic", as he is of the opinion that it is not correct "den Bau einer Sprache zu einer bestimmten Zeit mit Kategorien irgendeiner vorhergehenden oder folgenden Periode zu messen" (to establish the structure of a language at a certain time using categories of some other past or future period). His interests were broad

and included even deaf-mutes, aphasia and the speech of children. One of his conclusions was that phonetics has to be included in linguistics.

Like Ščerba, Jones, Martinet, Malmberg, Coseriu and others, Baudouin makes a difference between "phonetics" and "phonology" but without considering a clear separation possible and necessary. As a whole the discipline should be called "phonetics" (also: "phonology") and the two sub-divisions "anthropophonics" and "psychophonetics" are suggested. (Two years before his death he suggests, however, the term "phonetics" for "anthopophonics".)

Also in the field of diachrony Baudouin appears as a pioneer. In studies at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century the definition of "psychic accent" is found (which is said to have nothing in common with the "pure phonetic accent"). Certain phonemes are in this way 'accentuated", if they play an important enough role in the morphological structure of the words. They are assumed to be especially resistant to change. On the other hand phonemes are likely to disappear, if they are not psychically accentuated. Häusler summarizes one of Baudouin's problems as follows: (So soll dad Schwinden des unbetonen i im Infinitiv der russischen Verben nicht nur auf das allgemeine Bestreben zurückgehen, die Endvokale aufzugeben, sondern auch auf die fehlende Funktion dieses Vokals: Die gegebene Form ist auch ohne das i allein durch den palatisierten Endkonsonanten eindeutig bestimmt." (Thus the disappearance of the unstressed i in the infinitive of the Russian verb is not only to be traced back to the general attempt to give up end vowels but also to the missing function of this vowel: The particular form is,even without i, clearly determined by the palatalized final consonant.)

Many linguists consider Baudouin as a predecessor of the founders of the Prague school of phonology. One might be inclined to believe Häusler to be right in this respect. There is, however, the alternative possibility not of looking for a single founder, but simply of recognizing the importance of linguists like Baudouin, Trubetzkoy and Jakobson for the development of phonology without stressing

the question of priorities.
As a matter of fact, phonological ideas existed before Baudouin. Such questions aside, however, it does appear that Baudouin was a more important linguist than he has been generally considered.

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